[00:00:00.240] - Speaker 1

I am Machiki Jerry. I'm mostly junior. I'm originally from southern Illinois, a little town called Carbondale. But I've lived a lot of time in West Oakland, have a lot of roots there. I work with another nonprofit. Let me start over. The way that I got in contact with sue and Bruce and this nonprofit is by working with a different nonprofit called the Self Help Hunger Program. So I got involved with the project. I met sue and Bruce at an event that we're hosting at the Self Help Hunger Program. And they were passing out flyers, trying to get people engaged and writing their stories, and nobody was doing it. And I wanted to make sure that sue and Bruce's time was worth it. So I went out and I started getting people's stories, and I brought it back to him. That's when sue offered me a little position working with her. Basically, we're trying to keep your stories alive, make sure that people don't forget where you come from and the struggles that we have been through so that we can obtain knowledge to not go through it again and also build a better and brighter future for our children.

[00:01:05.740] - Speaker 1

That's my understanding. Being part of a community has always been part of who I am. I'm just a family man when it comes to it. And I love to be loved. I love to love other people. And I feel that now the way that the world is working with COVID-19 and pollution, people are scared. They're in their house. They don't know their neighbors. I think a better way to be safer and feel safer and more comfortable in the world is by building a sense of community and bridging that throughout other communities. So you know your neighbors who's walking down the street and you feel comfortable saying hi, that's okay to start off again by saying, what is Commons Archive? Commons archive is a collective of people who want to carry our stories to the near future, to the future generations. Try that one more time. Common Archives goal is to take our generation stories and bring it forth into the future so that they're never lost. Okay, how does it try to do that? It does it by bridging that connection. Most people, they don't want to go outside and just introduce themselves to their neighbors.

[00:02:16.090] - Speaker 1

The truck gives good reason for people to come outside and be engaged with it. It's cute, it's nonthreatening, it's yellow. It's like ice cream truck. But it's always about in the words, I want to be your neighbor. So it gives you a good feeling, honestly. You just want to figure out what it's about. Most of the questions that they ask when doing it, it makes us feel comfortable with building a community within our backyard. It's so hard to open up dialect with the people around you, especially when you go so long not talking to each other. So this gives people a really good understanding of how easy it is to bridge that connection between your neighbors and how fruitful those relationships are. Can you describe the truck, what it does, and what it looks like? Oh, my God. The truck is the cutest thing I've ever seen in my life. I'm six foot two. I can almost stand over it and touch the other side of the truck. That's how small it is. I love it. It's yellow. Bright yellow. Moves really slow, doesn't make any noise. And on the side of it, it literally just screams, hey, I want to be your neighbor.

[00:03:23.400] - Speaker 1

How could you not love that truck? It's one of those things you come up to and you're like, hey, what's going on here? Can I get to know I want to be a part of this? This is really cool. It's a really good question. The truck helps with community engagement by doing exactly that, giving them a reason to come out and look at the truck. And while you're looking at the truck, there's ten other people looking at the truck, and you're asking the person who's driving the truck, what is this about? But it says in bright Led colors, we want to be your neighbor. Come and talk to us. Let's start a conversation. So this truck does exactly what we want in building a community. It gives people a reason to talk to each other, and it does it quite well. And what's on the truck? What's on the truck? On the truck, one side is a Led screen. So whatever they're

playing, whether it be a music video, whether it be music, whether it be people's stories where you've been actually interviewing them on a camera, it could be anything. Whatever somebody wants to help bridge the community together within their own neighborhood.

[00:04:24.720] - Speaker 1

On the other side, they just recently put a picture of people, and on that picture is words. Forget the words. What are the words? Wow. That's what it is. You see that truck and you're just so curious. It's one of those things to where when you see something poking up on the other side of the TV, and you're like, oh, my God, that's not the TV. That's not what I'm watching. Let me go see what that is. It could be a mouse or something. You just really are so curious about it and so engaged that you have to walk up and figure out what's going on with the truck. So it does a really good job of starting that conversation, because that's where it starts. It's right there in the middle of the truck. So I just started working with sue and Bruce in the truck. So I haven't been to that many events, but the events that I have been to, people just love it. They just love each other. I found that there are a whole bunch of communities out there that are willing to talk to each other. So when you just drive that little yellow truck in between those communities, they're like, hey, let's come outside.

[00:05:28.600] - Speaker 1

It gives people a reason to party. So we had the Black everyday Black History Month. That was really cool because it just brought more people to the event. And then we went to some little neighborhood potlucks and it gave those people in those neighborhoods the idea to actually come out because I remember sue telling me that some of those people were not even going to have potlucks until they saw Bruce and the little yellow truck. And they're like, hey, let's have a potluck. And most of those people didn't even know each other, but they had name tags and stuff like that. My neighborhood is very underprivileged and there's no attention given to it. Nobody cares. Nobody really knows what's going on on my side of the tracks. And the fact that this little truck is bringing people's attention outside, it's also bringing people's attention to where we need the most attention. So, like, in my neighborhood, we don't have good water, right? We don't have potlucks. We don't have throw parties outside because everybody's getting I don't know if I can say that. Can I start over? Yes. My neighborhood is very underprivileged and we have no intention and no one cares about what's going on, but sue and Bruce does.

[00:06:47.470] - Speaker 1

And they make that very apparent by driving into the neighborhoods that needs the most attention. And we need that now. We need people to bring up our problems and our struggles to the main fronts attention. We need people to know what's going on and not just look past it. And the truck does a really good job of just showing everybody what we're going through. And so it's not just taking our stories. It's taking our struggles. And it's teaching us that there are also common goals to achieve. OK, I'm sorry. I'm going to roll. I like this question. The truck is the best thing I've ever seen because of all the struggles that we go through that nobody knows about. And that truck, when we pass out those letters and we're asking people a question like, hey, how do you want to feel safer in your community? Most of those people have the same exact answers, but they never even talk to each other. So we find common solutions to very common problems. And the point of the fact of the matter for me, why this is so important is because nobody's asking us what we're going through.

[00:07:55.080] - Speaker 1

But you guys are. The truck is and it does it in a very nonthreatening way, like very friendly. You see that yellow truck rolling down the street. You come out, you say hi, you ask what they're doing. And then you're like, oh, you're taking my

story, my struggles, you're putting it on a billboard and you're driving that billboard around town. So my problems are the world's problems. They're faced with the same things I'm faced with. So then people know these problems now. They have to find solutions to problems. And oftentimes when we find those common solutions that we all see could be the solution to the problem we can have that actually affect we can actually do something about it. Right? You see the city, they're like, okay, they have a thousand followers. Everybody loves them. They're telling people that Soandso got shot over here, or so and So lost their house or they ain't got no health care over here. Cities like, OK, too many people care about this problem now we need to do something about it. That's why I love working with you guys, because you cannot deny what's going on. Because you see this yellow truck driving down the street, you think it's cute.

[00:08:59.670] - Speaker 1

It is cute. You walk up to it, and then you realize what they're really about, and you're like, oh, my God, I never thought about that. I didn't even know that was going on. I live five blocks away. That's so crazy. You know what? I know some people. So not only does it bridge the community and the connections that make people feel safer where they are, it also bridges connections and resources so people know where to go. You, Blake. I didn't know. Like me, I'm having problems with college right now. I need people who know who to talk to and where to go for these resources. And sue and Bruce. I was just talking to sue about what I should do for college. And the cool thing about that is I didn't know sue three or four months ago, but I know her now, and it's because of the yellow truck. And now I feel so trustworthy of her. I can ask her for that help, and she can point me to different resources. This is a really good project because nobody's doing this. There are people who are doing this, but not like sue and Bruce.

[00:09:56.430] - Speaker 1

Not in a little yellow truck with a giant electronic billboard. Sorry. I went on and on. I apologize. What did you learn about the other neighborhoods? Well, from driving with sue and Bruce, I figured out that every neighborhood is exactly the same, just in small, different details. Like, we had met this guy. I forget his name, but he reminded me so much of my uncle because he was just blabbering and blabbering and blabbering and Blabbering. But I was listening and listening and listening, and I was like, you know what? You remind me just as my Uncle Sam. And I don't know why, but you do. And then they had kids running around. I remember in my house, we had kids running around all the time, playing football on the sidewalk. Nobody was in the street. It's the same way. It shows me that I'm exactly the same, that we're all living in the same place and we're all living the same life. We just don't know it because we're so caught up in what we're going through. You're talking about when he was like, I've been up here feeding and talking to people. Everybody knows me.

[00:10:55.590] - Speaker 1

So this guy was like, I love it. He was walking around. He was telling us. He was like, hey, I've been here for so long, everybody knows me. They know my old dog Tyson. When I'm walking down the street, the kids know to stand up, correct? The parents come out, they say, Hi. So what you guys are doing that's what he said to us I've been doing my entire life, right? And what that shows me is we need more people just like that. But the truck brings all those people together. So now we have a team of outstanding people who are figureheads in their community who can bridge those connections, which is really cool. I hope it builds up. The momentum just keeps on going. I want people to know about you everywhere in California. I want you guys to drive up from I don't want it to just be in Oakland, right? I want it to get so big that it expands to San Francisco and then it goes to San Leandro and then it goes to volleyball. Because just like we're dealing with these problems in Berkeley. In Oakland, they're dealing with it right next to us, just in a different city.

[00:12:01.750] - Speaker 1

So I just hope that people will continue loving this project and continue wanting to be a part of it and wanting it to grow just like I do so that it can grow into something way more beautiful on a bigger and much larger scale about that. So, Sue, God bless our heart, we are trying to promote this event. It's called Black August. But we didn't really have any way of doing it. So Sue Graciously let us use the truck and go and pass out flyers. Now, she also introduced me to this nice man. His name was David, and he was having a potluck that same day when we were passing out the flyers. So I went there. Turns out a lot of the people who were there were hard hitters. I mean, the people who really run things behind closed curtains. And those are the people that we need to know about our struggles. So I just thought it was so great that I was able to meet a person who was running for mayor and meet three people who was on city council and then a victim liaison for the Oakland police. Also, that was a great meeting too, because she said to me, when I show you my business card, don't fall out.

[00:13:08.680] - Speaker 1

Everybody always falls out. And I'm like, Why? Just look at it. And it says Oakland Police Department. And most people would fall out. But right under it, I see victim liaison. She's like, hey, man, I'm not even a cop. I work in direct contact with the people who are victims from the cops doing it right, gun violence and all these things. And it gave me an open perspective of people who work within the police department, who has nothing to do with the brutality, who has nothing to do with the struggle, who are literally just trying to help people gain back their freedom, show people how to get their people or their families bodies back and stuff like that. And I just thought that was really cute. I thought it was really cool. And the fact that I'm just some man, some little kid from the wrong side of the tracks, I don't even have a savings account, but now I'm drinking Hennessy with people who are running for mayor, I thought that was just really good. And that's what we want, right? We want to bridge that connection and make that connection. So intertwined to where people from the opposite side of the tracks are sipping whine with you.

[00:14:11.580] - Speaker 1

You're chilling, you're listening to each other. And when you speak about your problems, you're speaking to people who have the power to actually affect and change. So that's really good. God bless sue and Bruce and the common archives in that little yellow truck. Yeah. So majority of the time, matter of fact, every time that the yellow truck goes out, they're going out with the goal of gathering people's stories, asking them questions and getting those answers so that they can create a dialogue and then put it on the billboard for the rest of the world to see. Now, the way that we do that is we have these little pieces of paper has a thought bubble on it and we ask you a question or we tell you the prompt and you just write down your story, what you think about it. Yes. So we had a few questions that struck me in particular. One of them was, what do you want to feel safer in your community? And a lot of people said unity. We need people to feel unified, like they trust each other so it can be safer on the streets. And then another question that we were asking was, what resources do you think most effectively prevent violence?

[00:15:24.340] - Speaker 1

And a lot of people said education. And I think that's very, very true. Right now in Oakland, if you don't know what's going on, they're closing down a lot of schools, a lot of schools that have been here for a long time. And majority of the people who go there are very low income underprivileged like myself. And that's the only way they can get education is by that underprivileged school. And they're cutting them down like weeds fast too. We have no real control over it. So that question, it stood out to me because a lot of people said the same thing. It's on everybody's mind. It's education. And they're taking education away from us. And the fact that we can ask that question openly and then people give us that

answer openly. It means that they're just as passionate about that problem as we are. Right? That's the coolest thing about the truck is we find common solutions to very common problems. And we don't even know we're thinking the same. We're like, what's going on in the world? They're taking down churches, they're taking down schools and stuff like that. We need more education.

[00:16:28.260] - Speaker 1

But don't nobody want to band together. So this truck, it goes around and you're not even asking the question directly. You're like you're not asking, hey, what do you feel about education and the fact that they're taking it away from underprivileged kids? No, you just ask them a very generalized question and then everybody has the same answers because we're going through the same exact problems and we all have it on our mind what the solution could be. This doesn't just bridge the connection between communities. It also helps us find problems and then finding those problems at finding the right questions. And then after finding the right questions, we can hopefully affect some change to it, right? And then another cool thing about the truck is the fact that the billboard it's led, it's always running. When that truck is on, it's on. That means all those problems when it's driving down the street to being blast centerviewed, to everybody else on the street, that means those problems where people weren't even thinking about all the schools being closed. Now they're thinking about it, but also they see that people see it too. They're like, education, education, we need more education.

[00:17:33.310] - Speaker 1

They're taking down the schools. More education, more education. It's so important to have these pieces of paper because in a way it makes you feel anonymous, like you're not blabbering. You can just write down, hey, I want education, right? And then you put all that in and everybody has the same thing written down. But you didn't even have to speak to the person next to you to do so. Somebody just brought the question up to your mind and you're like, hey man, this is what we need. And it's very apparent to us, but it's not apparent to a lot of people. A lot of people don't know what's going on. So I work with it's, not just me doing it. There's a lot of people who drive the truck. There's a lot of people who do community engagement within the common archives network. But for me, seeing all these young people out there feeling empowered about the work that they're doing gives me help, lets me know that there are actually people willing to work on these problems and they're doing it on a day to day basis. We're not just spouting rhetoric like, hey, this is the problem.

[00:18:30.720] - Speaker 1

We have young adults, young people out there like, hey, let me be a part of this. I need to help my people. And this is a good way to start. So I worked with a lot of intelligent young men and young women who are very personable and very personal, very sincere. So when you speak to them, you want to let them know your entire life story. So the people that the Common Archives have picked to actually do the community engagement, they picked very well, because a lot of those people I find myself talking to about things I ain't talked about in years. We're talking about our families, our struggles and financials, and it's just so easy to talk to those people. So shout out to all those young, beautiful men and women that I work with, because God knows, couldn't do it without him. Sorry. I keep on leaning forward. I can't. It's my natural stance.

[00:19:30.500] - Speaker 2

Yeah, he'll be mining questions, I'm sure. Yeah. Refine some of the yes. I mean, we hold a copy of the reference set, right? Just as Golden Gate and the other branches do. Okay, we'll see how it goes. My name is Sean Dickerson. I'm an archivist with the African American Museum and Library at Oakland, special Division of the Oakland Public Library. I've

been working with Commons Archive since the inception to support projects and also as a site that houses the reference set for primary documents republished by Carmen's Archive. Carmen's Archive is a neighborhood memory project, collecting stories about Golden Gate neighborhood in particular and connecting neighborhoods through shared conversation and through projects that bring a sense of unity and neighborhood togetherness and belonging. Commons Archive brings neighbors into conversation through community projects that involve celebrations, community gatherings, particular workshops, looking at histories, and bringing conversations of panelists together to share stories between old neighbors and new. So I work for the African American Museum and Library in Oakland, which was originally cited in the Golden Gate Library Branch by members and community members who lived within the Golden Gate neighborhood. So the African American Museum and Library has a deep and long standing connection with the neighborhood and with the sense of place.

[00:21:10.790] - Speaker 2

It made natural sense for us to get involved with Commons Archive as a place to be supportive of the project, but also to serve as a repository for aspects of the project, documentation that would live in perpetuity for a study and for access with the community.

[00:21:27.130] - Speaker 1

Okay, I'm sorry. How did you get involved with Commons Archive?

[00:21:35.020] - Speaker 2

I first got involved with Commons Archive through my work at the African American Museum and Library at Oakland, where I work in the Archives Department. Our institution, part of the public library system, was originally cited at the Golden Gate Branch Library and by founders who resided in the Golden Gate neighborhood. So there was a natural fit between the relationship of AMLO and the Golden Gate neighborhood to get involved in a supportive function, but also as a repository for documentation of Commons Archive that would be available for study and available for access to the community. Yeah, so I've been participated in Commons Archives collecting efforts through neighborhood stories collected at neighborhood events. We are also at the AfricanAmerican Museum and Library, a site for one of the memory boxes to collect neighbor stories. So visitors to our museum and library will often reflect on their stories of community or their stories of neighborhood, share them with us, and we will connect them with the project just techniques and tools. Yeah. My encounters with common archives were as a neighborhood oral history collecting effort and we watched through the steps of gathering that and collecting those into a set of reference materials which were published alongside some republications of scholarly work on the neighborhood on census and track data, information about the neighborhood kind of compilations of sociology, oral history interviews and republications.

[00:23:07.400] - Speaker 2

And then I've also been involved with community events, inviting neighbors to come in to share their stories and recollections alongside one another. Yeah, I mean, I know for me, some of the highlights of the neighborhood events have happened just in conversation with the folks sitting next to me. So I think of meeting neighbors and residents. I am a North Oakland resident myself. And so meeting neighbors who maybe blocks away from me, or meeting friends of the speakers who are coming to address the crowds and learning their stories, noticing what people are reading and the books they've brought with them and having conversations and opening about some of our interests and overlapping connections has been really rewarding for me. Yeah. I am aware that the Here Here Community Billboard is touring the neighborhoods of

North Oakland, often identified by its soundtrack as it passes. Oftentimes during my day, I will even reflect and hear it in my head that Won't You Be my Neighbor song will come to mind and bring a smile to my face. And I look forward to being able to book the truck for an event at my own residence where I live in the Golden Gate neighborhood on 61st street to introduce my neighbors and block members to the truck.

[00:24:30.950] - Speaker 2

Trying to do cummins archives has struck me as incredibly needed since the start as a way to reignite conversation with rapidly changing faces of neighborhoods. It feels only more pronounced now in a post pandemic world for us to rebuild those conversations. And I know that for myself, I've drawn a lot of comfort from attending Commons Archives projects and reconnecting with folks in spaces that are, you know, months ago didn't feel it safe to travel into. And now, as I begin to renavocate reentering the public, I think this is a really gracious way to bring about conversation and connectedness. I know you're like speaking complete paragraph. Oh, no. Am I making it hard? Okay. There's a real palpable sense of impact at many of the events that I've attended and for myself have even connected with folks who represent aspects of history I may not have been aware of. At the last commons archive event, I met individuals who are responsible for the martial arts programs of the Black Panther Party's Community School and connected with hearing their stories, inviting them to come in to our museum and library and share their stories and continue to preserve history.

[00:25:54.860] - Speaker 2

We work from a perspective of preserving history. And so Commons Archives has helped us build those connections with resident stories that are there to be heard and shared. I think that it's critical to do those as folks are around, as folks live here. I know one of the themes that I've identified in sharing and sitting next to these neighbors is many have moved away and are here visiting just for the day, or they're here visiting with family who live in the neighborhood. And so folks will move on. Stories will move on, generations will move on. And so it really is the duty of all of us to kind of listen and to be receptive. And it's even more the duty of those who work in settings that preserve that history, to be alert to it and to be responsive. Yes. I think what's interesting is this question of what constitutes a traditional archive. And I think my argument would be a traditional archive is a community archive. And it begins with this origin of meeting a stranger, meeting someone who's led a different life than you. The African American Museum and Library began because families came together and they had formed collections that were in shoe boxes, that were under the bed, that were in closets and in garages.

[00:27:19.250] - Speaker 2

This is where history is living. It's still where it's living today. Simply because there are settings of institutional repositories, of academic or private archives simply means that they are resourced differently. But I think that community archives represent the truest nature and the truest intent of collecting stories and seeing seeing them as stories, seeing them as stories that live in a lips sense rather than a kind of stale or foreclosed historical artifact. Yeah. So I've lived in Oakland for I think I'm reflecting this year will be the 15th year that I've lived in Oakland. Primarily was a downtown Oakland resident in the Lakeside neighborhood, which was convenient to me for where I've worked at the Oakland Museum of California, the African American Museum and Library. And so my sense of rudenedness was really in the way that I commuted to work, that I would walk to my neighborhood and that I would grocery shop in the neighborhood, that I wasn't a car owner, that I used public transit. I felt defined by all of these values. I've recently moved to North Oakland within the last year, mainly for many other folks, during the Pandemic for a need for greater space.

[00:28:44.380] - Speaker 2

It felt available to find rent discounts in a way that I never could before. And my partner and I were able to find a rental, a twobedroom rental with outdoor space and garden beds and was earlier. Today just kind of pulling our summer harvest and putting in our fall plants is such a different experience from what it is to go to the local bodega or market on 15th in Alice Street and do your nightly grocery run. I'm thinking of sustainability different. I'm thinking of neighbors different. I'm thinking of the density of what it is to live in apartment block in downtown Oakland versus what it is to rent a single family home in a neighborhood with multigenerational use passing between neighbors. You reflect on community and you reflect on your habits so much differently. Yeah, I look forward to.

[00:29:44.000] - Speaker 1

Here.

[00:29:44.270] - Speaker 2

Here community billboard can be booked. I look forward to booking it for our neighborhood. And I hear that it's kept busy. I heard that between neighbors, neighbors booking the truck and between neighborhood events at places like the California Hotel and the Black Liberation walking Tour, that it's making appearances around town. Yeah. One of the strategies I think our neighbors use is seeing opportunity. I think. I have this sense I live on a stretch of 61st street that intersects with a cul de sac that's a dead end. And so there's a really interesting neighborhood feel of the end of the road where people kind of circle the block. It's a place where when you're out on your evening walk, it's natural to come down and to make a loop. It's part of this kind of circuit, this transit. And there's a sense that when people are passing by that you stop to identify yourself. And maybe it's at a safe covet distance, but there's an exchange that happens. There's a sense of the cul de sac as an opportunity for hello, if at that, or an opportunity to notice when someone is out doing yard work.

[00:30:57.200] - Speaker 2

There's a felt sense. I also get a real sense of a kind of community watch. There's a sense of investment that the neighborhood really watches out for unfamiliar vehicles on the road or folks walking after dark kind of checking in that people are okay. There's a real felt sense of eyes are together on keeping the neighborhood safe. Yeah, I think what's so interesting about community art is that it is an archiving project of itself. It's often speaking to the moment in a way that we may be less truthful in the documentation we take for ourselves. I mean, I think that we photograph social media is a really great example of the way that we're selfdocumenting is not necessarily going to be the stories that remain in the future. And I think that the pandemic is a really wonderful opportunity to look at community expression of art that comes about, that is personal, that's political, and that's messaging. And I think that that has taken in Oakland that's taken many forms, whether it's representational or figurative, public art in the forms of murals, or it could be graffiti culture, or it could be ways of tagging in your neighborhood.

[00:32:10.590] - Speaker 2

I think those are all equally expressions of a kind of authorship and a sort of a marking of place. Yes, I do think about Commons Archive as something that's interdisciplinary and I think I understand it or situate it within a greater field of documentation projects within visual arts or with a visual arts background. I think of when we talk about things like the archival turn in contemporary art, this is an expression that comes up a lot. And I think it's because this impulse to archive is I sometimes think of the archivist today as what the DJ was in the 1990s, where DJ culture used to be. There is a similar function of what it is to remix what it is to collect. I think these are common themes that have been apparent across

different generations. I think the expression of archiving is something that has a great timeliness to today and I think of it as having a sensibility to it. And the sensibility of it is not one that is inseparable from a sense of creativity or a sense of artistic expression. I also think that the visual arts is often more accepting and more embracing of interdisciplinary projects, projects that might take the form as a block party or a community billboard truck.

[00:33:44.000] - Speaker 2

And often those bases are the first to support financially or creatively projects that have a multiforme expression. Totally, yes. I imagine that you're here community truck visiting my neighborhood in dusk and I imagine it being that time of night when folks are out walking and are out on the street and I imagine the kind of curiosity that it provokes in people. I think there's something that begs you to ask a question of what is happening. I like the kind of sense of almost the sense of like making the familiar unfamiliar in that moment that there's something unusual that's happening that generates an interest or generates a curiosity. And I imagine that drawing people in the cul de sac that I live on is rather famously this site for donuts on the street. It's where folks come to bring their cars to do looping donuts. And I sort of like the idea of this other kind of vehicle that shows up and that is sort of making a loop or circuit in the same place and striking curiosity of what is that? That's different. That's something I want to know more about. I think that for me the lasting impact of Commons archive will be both the documentation that lives on.

[00:35:12.470] - Speaker 2

It's important, I think that we, as an institution, as the African American museum and library, to continue collecting the flyers to collecting the business cards, collecting the material documents of the project so that the project in its integrity is remembered in time. And it is something that future researchers of Oakland will have opportunity to access and to look at. But I think that the other legacy is really the lived legacy for those who were there who experienced it. I think it's the way that it lives in your mind, and it's the way that it lives for us who encountered or experienced it.

[00:35:58.100] - Speaker 3

My name is Sue Mark, and I am the project developer. My practice is very hybrid, and I started working in the area of community engagement before there was really a vocabulary for it and have always been fascinated with how people understand the place in which they live, how they think about their experiences, what are underlying questions in communities. So I was brought on to do a project early in 2013 2014 that centered in the neighborhood area on San Pablo Avenue as it runs from Berkeley, Emeryville, and Oakland, and it was only a three mile stretch that was the focus area, but that seemed too big for me. And so I was riding my bike around and walking around and kind of landed at the Golden Gate Library because I see libraries as a cornerstone of community. It's a key place, like one of these third places where people can come. It's not their home, it's not a place where you can buy things, but it's a trusted resource where you can find information very intergenerational. A lot of people crosssection come through the library, and so I just got really curious about what was in the library, what was on the library's front lawn.

[00:37:43.230] - Speaker 3

So my background as a creative is really informed by the way that I do research and the different ways that I try to understand a place. And even though I live in North Oakland, I don't live in that part of North Oakland. So I was really an outsider there. Commons Archive is a communitybased neighbor history project that incorporates not only shared stories, but shared resources, celebrations, as well as printed material and opportunities for long time and new neighbors to get to know each other better. Commons Archive began as an exploration of this one particular spot in North Oakland, the

Golden Gate Neighborhood. As I was researching the neighborhood, it became clear it was kind of a micro epicenter of a lot of the turbulence that been happening throughout Oakland. A lot of people were leaving. Longtime neighbors, especially black neighbors, were leaving, being pushed out, and new neighbors from San Francisco were moving in, and there were a lot of hotspots people didn't really know how to talk to each other. One of the key things that came up was a realtor that rebranded the neighborhood. Instead of calling it some of the neighborhood names that people were familiar with, like Golden Gate or Longfellow or Santa Fe, they rebranded the whole region as Nobi, North Oakland, Berkeley, and Emeryville.

[00:39:38.610] - Speaker 3

And they basically took a kind of colonialist approach, like, this is new territory. You can come here and you can create your own space, totally ignoring all of the layers of history and tremendous legacy of the community. And so I really wanted to understand better how longtime neighbors wanted to talk about the neighborhood and what are the different ways in which new neighbors could get to know the neighborhood. So Commons Archive really started from that point of how do we build bridges, how do we create safe and trusting opportunities to approach something that's pretty fiercely confrontational, this idea of what gentrification is? Well, I think it is a really interesting question to try and define what a particular part of a neighborhood is. And it definitely depends on your race and your generation. This area of North Oakland, which is kind of nestled in between where Oakland and Berkeley and Emeryville come together, there are a couple of major streets like Market Street and San Pablo Avenue. There aren't distinct lines that separate these communities. But when we talk about the layers of history, we can say that in this area, starting in the 18 hundreds, of course, this was the land of the Loloni Mawakma traditionally going back and it still is their territory.

[00:41:38.450] - Speaker 3

Then more white people started to come. It was kind of a vacation summer home area for people in San Francisco. They were coming across and it was farmlands. And then we had immigrants from Portugal and Italy coming in and that was in late 1800, early 19 hundreds. And then I think we can see there are seismic shifts. And a big one was of course during World War II and the Great Migration. And a lot of blacks from the south started coming to this part of Oakland which had been heavily redlined. And there were certain areas, certain streets where, say the original owners of the house would sell to a black family. Or I heard stories from other neighbors that there were lightskinned blacks that passed as maybe being Portuguese and so realtors didn't question whether or not they could buy their home. So it started to become more of a mixed neighborhood in the 1940s and then more black families started to move in. And as that happened, more white families started to leave. So by the was more of an AfricanAmerican neighborhood. And we also know that time period that this is the birthplace of the Black Panther Party.

[00:43:34.020] - Speaker 3

And the Black Panther Party headquarters was on Grove Street, MLK and had a huge influence in the neighborhood and were doing on some of their survival program work. They also used the Golden Gate Library as a meeting center. And then starting with the 1980s, the crack epidemic hit, which was devastating, devastating to the neighborhood. Prior to that, people would leave their front doors unlocked. Everybody knew each other on the block. There was a legacy of having block clubs, which was an artifact of travel clubs from the Great Migration. People embraced each other as a kind of extended family on one block. Everybody knew who could fix plumbing if you had a problem. Everybody knew who needed a little extra help. Everybody knew each other's kids. There was a sense, like a deep sense of caring collectively as neighbors, as people together on the street, everyone knew each other. And these are stories that I started to hear

again and again as neighbors were talking about what they've lost in this area. Well, the start of Commons Archive was really like the start of any project, like, how do you get to know the people in a place?

[00:45:10.940] - Speaker 3

And so I started with the library and getting to know some of the neighbors through the library. But I also started looking at what are the neighborhood groups, what are the community based organizations? And I just started going to meetings. And it took a really long time of people seeing me at meetings. And I would talk to people about what my intention was with the project of learning from neighbors how they're managing change, what does change mean for them, how are they impacted by it? And there are certain gatekeepers in the neighborhood, some neighbors who had known longtime neighbors for a while, decades, but we're very reluctant to let me to meet with them. So there's a lot of trust building, a lot of time that it takes to enter into a new place and to really try and get a nuanced understanding of the complexity of what people are dealing with. When you talk about gentrification, or change, as I like to call it, change rather than gentrification, gentrification becomes just something where there's winners and losers. But we're talking about a whole spectrum of impacts when a neighborhood changes rapidly. So we started with gathering stories.

[00:46:54.630] - Speaker 3

The idea really, of how is each person a contributor to the story of the neighborhood, to the history of the neighborhood. And I was kind of thinking about history with a capital H versus history with a lowercase H. We're so used to other people telling us what the history is, but we're not as used to being asked ourselves, how are we participating in the history? What is my role in the history? How are my experiences valuable for the story, the history of this place? And so what I really wanted to do is start unpacking those hierarchies of who is the dedicated historian. We all are historians. We all create the history. We live the history. But we're not given permission to have that authority, to have those expressions.

[00:47:58.700] - Speaker 1

You're doing great.

[00:48:00.140] - Speaker 3

Oh, good. There's just so much I can say about these stories that people have shared with me. And, you know, what always happens when I'm working on these projects is that I can't take the role as sort of an objective outsider. I live in North Oakland. I just don't live in the part of North Oakland in which I'm working. But it's a five minute bike ride for me to go and meet folks in these different parts of North Oakland. And inevitably, the relationships that I build are actually quite close. And so I was just thinking about Fred Williams, who owns Williams Appliances. It's on San Pablo. Right where Alcatraz dead ends. And he came to North Oakland from the south, from Alabama in the 1980s to escape some fierce Jim Crow that he was experiencing. His family wanted him to be safe. His uncle had started this business in I think it was in the early 1960s. And so another longtime neighbor said, if you want to know something about the neighborhood, you've got to meet Fred Williams, his appliance business. He provided all of the neighbors with good serviceable, used appliances, and a lot of black families, bought up many properties so that this was another income stream for them.

[00:49:49.310] - Speaker 3

And so single family homes became apartments. And Fred knew everyone, and he says hello to everyone anyway. Fred, I haven't seen him in a couple of years because of COVID and he was taking care of his mom in Alabama, who was dying.

But he just texted me the other day to show me a picture. He's like, Sue, I haven't seen you in a long time. This is what I look like. And so these are relationships that are so meaningful for me personally. It's kind of hard to separate. Like, where does the project start and where does my life start? They merge together because trying to understand experience of a place, trying to feel contentment when you're in a place, like, what does it mean to stay? What does it mean to manage the change? I've lived here for almost 30 years, and I know fewer people now than I did when I lived here in my first decade. Why is that? What's happening with that? So these are some of the questions that are so important to ask and talk to people about. But where are the opportunities to do that? With Commons Archive, we wanted to create multiple opportunities to have these kinds of conversations in a context that was safe and trusting and also involved learning.

[00:51:27.430] - Speaker 3

So we did workshops at the library. We brought different community based organizations, neighborhood groups, elders like Dr. Saturned from the Black Panther Party to talk about their history in the neighborhood. And during these workshops, we always created opportunities for people who came not just to be audience, but to be participants. We've also had a series of walking discussions led by neighbors to talk about what they know of the neighborhood. Rather than bringing in a history expert from the outside to talk about their research, we want to know the stories from the people who've lived there, who know what it's like to have these different kinds of experiences of the many eras of the neighborhood. Yes. One of the first events that we had, which was at the Golden Gate Library, was a block party. The library, decades ago, had a legacy of having block parties right in the back parking lot of the library. It was kind of made for that, but it hadn't happened in a long time. I would say from the late 1980s through to about the early two thousand s, the library was kind of operating at half speed, and there are a lot of different reasons for that, but adults especially kind of lost their connection to the library.

[00:53:08.160] - Speaker 3

And so we wanted to do something that brought in celebration, that brought in joy, and also an opportunity to learn about all of the different kinds of resources available at the library. So when I started talking about this event at neighborhood meetings, I remember there was one woman who said, she said, do you want to have some music there? And I said yes, of course. She said, oh, great. I'm part of this neighborhood band. We've been playing together on and off for, I don't know, ten or twelve years, but we don't get to perform in many public places, so we would love to just come and do that. And so that's kind of what happened. People heard about it and felt like, oh, this is a good opportunity for us to come together in a new way. And it was kind of the start of having many celebrations at the library, sometimes at night when the library wasn't open, bringing in a DJ who remixed some of the interviews with neighborhood jazz, bringing in presenters who have a lot of expertise on the specific history of this neighborhood, of the families that were collecting history.

[00:54:32.020] - Speaker 3

So we've had the director of the African American America Museum and Library speak, as well as neighbors who have a lot of experience with the neighborhood. Having these kinds of neighborhood panels and conversations actually gives everyone permission to speak because they're coming from their own experience. And then neighbors feel like, I can talk about my experience too well, I think unpacking some of the relationships. In 2015, we did a series of recorded interviews with neighbors, and we wanted a spectrum of neighbors, black neighbors and white neighbors, men and women, people who had lived in the neighborhood, say, less than ten years, and people who had lived in the neighborhood more than 30 years. It took a really long time to meet people who felt comfortable to participate in these recorded interviews. But gosh, when we started doing them, there was a real passion and tenderness of thinking about Miss Josephine Lee, who recently passed away this spring. She would have celebrated her 97th birthday actually next week. And she talked about when

she moved into the neighborhood in the 1960s. And one of the things that she said is that she didn't want to become a prisoner in her own house.

[00:56:14.410] - Speaker 3

So she started to become an activist. And for her, that meant being a block captain. That meant getting to know everyone on her block. It meant introducing herself to new neighbors when they moved in and also supporting the community in other ways through the library. She helped start the Friends of the golden Gate Library, which at that time brought in resources to have a computer lab. I think that was in the late 1980s. She also started a summer jazz program, which had been going for 30 odd years. And another neighbor, Joanne Harper Dickinson, she was born in the neighborhood. Actually, I think her name is. I was thinking about another neighbor, Joanne Dickerson Harper, and she was born in the neighborhood, and she was telling me the story of how her parents actually were able to buy their house on a street where no other black families lived. And the original owners of the house were Jewish, and they sold the house directly to her parents, and that was in the 1940s. She talked a lot about growing up in the neighborhood and what a kind of loving community it was. It felt very diverse.

[00:57:46.410] - Speaker 3

It felt very safe. And she's continued to live in the neighborhood, and her daughter shares an apartment with her, but her daughter actually couldn't afford her own apartment and cannot afford to buy a house in the neighborhood. And so she's really committed to making sure that she finds bridges for new neighbors, that they have a way to get to know the history of the neighborhood. And she's really she just feels very compelled to let people know that this place has a history, this place has a legacy. Come to the neighborhood. Enjoy the neighborhood, but before you make any changes, please learn something about it. I was also thinking about another couple who had lived in the neighborhood maybe five, seven years, and I met them. They were very involved with one of the neighborhood groups, and as a white couple who were interested in moving to the neighborhood, they told me that before they bought their house, their next door neighbors wanted to meet them. Their neighbors are black and had lived there for several generations, and they wanted to know, who are the people who are coming in and what is their commitment to the block?

[00:59:19.300] - Speaker 3

How are they going to be neighbors together? And rather than feeling intimidated or put off, michael and his wife embraced this opportunity to really get to know their neighbors and developed a very personal relationship. And when I think it was Michael's mother was ill with cancer, their neighbors had a prayer circle for them. You know, so there are these incredible touch points with people's. Commitments to fortifying this role is like, how is it that I'm a neighbor, and how can I develop this relationship with the people who are living right around me? So one of the things that's always been really important for me in trying to understand roles of neighbor and neighbor lenis is what does it mean to be part of the neighborhood group, and what about the hundreds and hundreds of people who are not part of neighborhood groups? For many years, we'd centered Commons Archive at the Golden Gate Library, which is this natural point of coming together. People come in and out of the library. I think there's something like 20 people who come through the library every week. So one of my biggest concerns with this project is trying to understand what does it mean to be a neighbor, how are neighborhood groups formed?

[01:00:51.210] - Speaker 3

What is the role of block clubs? And what about people who aren't part of any of this kind of constellation of coming together as neighbors? And how do we reach people on a more intimate scale rather than in a meeting or in a special event? So one of the things that we started to do right before COVID hit, we had a series of listening sessions. We wanted to really give longtime black neighbors the opportunity to tell their stories to newer neighbors. And we met at a couple of different places. One place we met was at the Hip Hop Juice Box, a cafe. We met at community arts organization called Place for Sustainable Living. And in each of these listening circles, it was really an opportunity for people to hear stories that they might not hear any other way. And just as we started doing this process and we were going to do several of these, along with a deeper engagement and gathering neighbor stories, covet Hit, everything shut down. And then this whole process of coming together was fractured. We were all isolated and there was really no way to do this process. It doesn't exist on Zoom.

[01:02:31.440] - Speaker 3

And so I have been working with a neighbor who had been part of the Longfellow Community Association, and she was really concerned about the loss of stories of long time black neighbors, especially on her block. And she really wanted to do something to create pathways for people to hear these stories and to know the stories. And so we started working together on ways to have a process where neighbors on a block level could do something to come together and have an opportunity to get to know each other and how it could look would be varied. And we were thinking about developing a microgranting program and we brought in a lot of different community organizations and partners in this thinking process. We talked with people on Zoom in their living rooms as we were blueprinting this. We brought in Neighbors for Racial Justice to have a strong equity lens as well as other people who are working on bringing back some of the opportunities for neighborhood story sharing, like the Black Liberation Walking Tour with David Peters. Bringing back a library that had been taken away in the Hoover Grant neighborhood with the friends of the Hoover Drant Library on the Black Panther Party with Dr Saturu Ned.

[01:04:18.160] - Speaker 3

And really thinking through what ways can we support neighbors in doing this kind of work? And we had already thought about having this small, friendly vehicle, a singular parade that would drive around kind of like an ice cream truck with a billboard, a static billboard that would have some of the neighbor stories printed on it that we had collected. And we had had this large revision before COVID that we were going to record neighbor stories and do a series of massive nighttime projections on San Pablo Avenue and have a huge celebration at the Plaza of St. Columba Church on San Pablo with neighbor music and community groups providing resources and food and getting to know each other. And all of that was off the table. There was just no way that could happen. How do we safely engage when trust is low and people are afraid of each other in so many new ways because of COVID And so we decided that instead of trying to have something massive, we really needed to go on a much more intimate and small scale. And we thought, like, how can we equip this vehicle, this truck, with all these different capacities?

[01:05:59.830] - Speaker 3

And through our partnerships with the Black Panther Party the Black Panther Party Alumni Legacy Network, we met another really important neighbor. Sean Granberry, who started hip hop TV, has a lot of connection with media groups, and he connected us with someone who builds digital billboards for small vehicles. And he really became so impressed with the project and wanted to do it. So he custom made a billboard for us, for the truck. So we wanted to be able to showcase videos. We wanted to have sound coming through the truck because we wanted something that would drive

slowly down the street and somebody could be on their sidewalk and feel like it's safe. It's okay for me to come out. I don't have to get too close if I'm not feeling safe with that. So this idea for the Hear Hear community billboard was really born through recognition of what are we all feeling right now? And how can we continue on the process of sharing stories and build in new capacities for ways to care about each other, to get to know each other again, to start feeling like we can come together again. Well, this truck set that we're using for the Hear hear community billboard, something that's really important about it is it's friendly.

[01:07:51.430] - Speaker 3

We want it to be provocative, but not intimidating. So it's very small. It's, you know, I'm I'm five foot two, and I'm taller than the truck, and it's only 10ft long, so it's very compact. It's an old truck, it's from the 1970s, and it's a Suzuki truck. It looks nothing like any other vehicle on the street, so it really stands out. And we wanted to continue this process of having it stand out by choosing the color yellow for its refinishing paint job. And we work with a great design team to come up with a logo for the truck, which is emblazoned on the door. And it's got a massive quote bubble made out of a big piece of aluminum on one side of. This billboard. And then the other side is a large Led board, kind of like the advertising sign boards that you see along the freeway. And something that was really important for us with the truck is that we kind of wanted to take back this idea of media, of what we see in advertising and give the voice for local people. How can local voices take back media? So everything that's on the truck is all coming from neighbors in the neighborhood.

[01:09:37.600] - Speaker 3

We've been working with Youth Media Project in North Oakland, and they recorded a series of interviews with longtime neighbors. These are featured on the truck. We've got animations, very dynamic about events that we were attending, questions for neighbors to think about. We've also got a brief little promo about the truck that it's here for neighbors to share stories. And while that's playing, you hear this song, won't she be My Neighbor? And this song is sung by Sharon Von. She is now retired librarian from the Golden Gate Branch Library. And she, in addition to being a librarian, is an incredible jazz vocalist. And so, one of our community celebrations, she sang this song, Won't You Be My Neighbor? And it's become kind of like the motto or the soundscape, really, for the hear truck. And it's kind of informal, it's a little bit raw, and it really captures people's attention. Everybody stops what they're doing and smiles when they see the truck. They don't exactly know what it is, and they want to know more. And that's really what our intention was in creating this truck, because we wanted to have a way to draw people together to talk.

[01:11:24.460] - Speaker 3

And we wanted to do it in a way that brings joy and celebration and at the same time, ask some questions that may be difficult, ask questions that don't have an answer. That information needs to come from neighbors in order to respond to some of these questions. So something that's really important about having this truck is that we bring on board community engagers. So through different networks, we've been able to hire young black neighbors to drive the truck and to also engage with other neighbors around the questions on the truck. And so we've met with them a number of times and trained them on how to drive the truck. And the truck drives kind of meanders on North Oakland streets, and the route that it takes depends on the event. So, for example, we've had an event we were invited to participate in every day is Black History Month. Something that's really important about the existence of the truck is that it really depends on the coming together of a lot of different people to bring this effort forward, because we wanted to do it with integrity, intentionality, equity, making sure that it felt accessible for a lot of people in the neighborhood.

[01:13:01.920] - Speaker 3

We wanted it to be something that would ask hard questions but also be authentic. We wanted it to be something that would help support trusting relationships. We wanted it to be intergenerational that younger people and older people would be interested in it. So we brought together kind of neighbor council of some of the local groups, the Black Panther Party Alumni, Legacy Network, neighbors for Racial Justice, Design for Belonging, as well as some individuals who are doing important work in the community. And in putting forward the truck, we had laid a kind of groundwork of the physicality of the truck, what would be on the truck, and the components. And so with the neighbor council, we wanted to also think about some of the ways that people might encounter the truck. But honestly, we had no idea what would happen. We didn't know how people would react to it, and we didn't know how people would respond to it. We launched the truck with a neighborhood celebration, again at the Golden Gate Library in June. And that was the first large public event at the library that they had had in two years, the first time that people were coming together.

[01:14:37.030] - Speaker 3

And, you know, now two months later, it seems kind of normal. But it was really kind of amazing that here we are, like, after two years of being separated, now we can come out and come together. And so in launching the truck, we wanted to showcase the capacity of the truck and the potential for the truck. And right off the bat, what we wanted to make sure is that neighbors knew that the truck was for them, that they could actually hire the truck, they could book the truck to come to their block for any kind of coming together. So building on the work that we had done during lockdown and COVID and thinking about how can we support neighbors and coming together, we wanted to make it as easy as possible. So all you'd have to do is invite the truck to come to your block, pass out some postcards that we had about the purpose of the truck, let people know what time it would be there, and just ask your neighbors to come outside. That's the first step in trying to get to know each other again, is having safe meeting points on the sidewalk.

[01:15:55.480] - Speaker 3

Well, for the launch event, we had some neighbor tributes to local heroes who were really underrecognized by a lot of people in the neighborhood. Of course, in certain pockets, people knew about their incredible work. We also showcased the video interviews made by the youth media artists. And we also were so fortunate to have Dr. Saturn Ed as the MC for the event. Talking about the legacy of the Black Panthers and how he sees this truck is actually another part, an extension of their survival programs, because it's building caring relationships. Everybody wants to feel safe. Everybody wants to belong. And this truck, by coming out at events or creating events on a block, is a step towards that happening. You know, in thinking about how does Commons Archive present itself to the larger public, accessibility has always been my number one goal in any of the projects that we do, but especially because Commons Archive is coming through or people are meeting it at the library and so they're not expecting to see necessarily an art project there. So there's a kind of integration but also surprise component to Commons Archive. Photographs are very important in showcasing the work and sharing kind of this multifaceted perspective of the neighborhood, of the neighborhood through time and history.

[01:17:48.130] - Speaker 3

Something else, though, that really stands out as a kind of unique portraiture of neighbors is handwriting. Handwriting, like everybody's handwriting, is different. And so we've created a lot of different opportunities for people to share their stories in their own voice and in their own hand. And rather than typing that or changing that, we've wanted to accentuate it. And so even what I consider like the logo for Commons Archive is actually neighbors handwriting, writing the words Commons Archive. And so we have that on a big flag in front of the library. Not everyone is comfortable with having their photograph taken, but given the opportunity to write something about their opinion, a lot of people will feel comfortable to take a pen in

hand. And that I see as another really important expression of who they are. And so throughout the course of the project, we've had different ways that people can share their stories and then, you know, their handwriting I consider to be integral to what it is that they're saying. And so all of these cards that people have written on, we have several hundred of them are scanned, and we're hoping to create that into a book.

[01:19:22.700] - Speaker 3

But we've also created large format murals in the library of stories that people have written in their own hand. And now with the Here here truck, another big piece of the engagement process is that at every opportunity, at every event, there are key questions. And the key questions are coming from the organizers of the event. So we've done events with the Self help hunger program with the West Oakland cultural action network and the Black liberation walking tour. We've done an event with the Urban Peace Movement. We've done neighborhood events, events at black businesses. And we asked them, what are the questions that you want the community to discuss? And it could be about people's roots in Oakland. It could be about their opinions about reparations to members of the black community. It could be about what makes you feel safe? How do you feel connected to your neighbors? So these kinds of open questions are ways that we want to draw people in to write their responses and also have informal conversations at the truck as their writing responses. And we put them up and people can read them. So it circulates. And again, we're not trying to take what people write and then translate it or diminish their own voice.

[01:21:01.920] - Speaker 3

We want to amplify it. So we're now digitizing people's handwriting. So it's on this digital billboard. It's also on the large format billboard that's on the quote bubble. So that, I feel like, is part of the way that we're, you could say, creating an aesthetic for the project. It's different than a city project. It's different than a project that comes from, say, a social organization or a community organization. How we bring forward all of the different aspects of the project, what it looks like, how is it inviting to people, how are people feeling that permission, the accessibility to engage? That's incredibly important, because for me, I can say as a creative, it's my art, but it's not important to me that somebody understands it as art. Rather, for me, I want people to feel that they have no obstacles to participate, to engage, to share their truth, to share their history and their experiences. The future of Commons Archive is a really big question. Commons Archive, you know, started out as a singular effort that I thought would happen over the course of one year, and now it's almost more than seven years later. So we've had many different phases and iterations of the project, and I imagine hope that the here here truck can be taken under the wing of another organization to carry forward the work.

[01:23:06.380] - Speaker 3

A lot of people who've been involved in the process of bringing it forward have talked about, well, it doesn't only need to be in North Oakland. It could be in other parts of the city, or other parts of the city really need this to happen. Other members have talked about creating a fleet of vehicles. So I think as a model, it's really interesting to see how can this be replicated and who might want to take it on to make it bigger than it already is. When Commons Archives started, a big goal was finding a way that felt comfortable to bring longtime neighbors and new neighbors together. And how can there be more available pathways for new neighbors to know the stories of this neighborhood, of where they're moving in? And one of the things that I've always believed, I believe it for myself that I'm responsible to get to know the place where I'm at. I'm responsible to ask questions, to learn and to listen. And so in carrying that forward, how can I create opportunities for people to listen and learn that feel accessible and that feel comfortable? And one of the ways that we've done that is by creating a permanent reference collection at the Golden Gate Library.

[01:25:03.690] - Speaker 3

And in coming up with this idea of an archive, there are a lot of ways that archives are precious, that archives are exclusive, that archives are not open and available for people to touch, to feel, to participate. And we wanted this archive to really be communitybased, to be generated from neighbors and available to everyone. And Oakland. The Oakland Public Library has a couple of archives in downtown, which is not very far from North Oakland, but it's far enough that neighbors don't feel like they have the time or the capacity to go to those other branch libraries, the main library, the African American Museum and library in downtown to access the materials. So how could we bring the materials that matter most to where people already are? And so it was really incredible to work with the manager of the Golden Gate Branch Library in conceiving of this instead of having an archive that would be precious in boxes. She said, we can't manage that, but we know books. And she said, we can create a new Dewey Decibel number for a reference collection that's specific to the Golden Gate Branch Library in this neighborhood, and that's what we've done.

[01:26:33.670] - Speaker 3

There are nine titles in this iteration of the collection, and my hope always was that new neighbors would find this collection and open up some of the books and learn something about the place that they're moving into. And we've got materials that come right from neighbors. A neighbor wrote about what it was like to rebuild his house when he moved in in the late 1970s. Another neighbor wrote about his research into what it means to be a legacy neighbor, like, who has the right to call themselves an old time neighbor? Another book documents some urban planning research that was done by UC students. Another book is transcripts of all of the interviews that we did in 2015, materials that really belong to the public. It's public knowledge for public good. When we launched the Hear Community billboard truck, there was a neighbor that came up to me, and he said, sue, I've been really wanting to meet you, because a few years ago, I moved to the neighborhood, and I wanted to learn something about it. And I came to the library and asked one of the librarians, and they said, oh, you need to look at the Commons Archive local collection.

[01:28:09.200] - Speaker 3

And he was so happy that those books existed. And it was just amazing to me. It was so reaffirming and reassuring to know that it worked for one person, and maybe it's worked for other people, too, and I don't know their stories, but it was so incredible that, yes, we can try to make these kinds of changes. It doesn't happen fast, but we need to take these steps. And this neighbor actually was thinking about having the truck come to his block to do something. He wasn't sure. But then one of our members of our team talked to him about, well, what would it take for the truck to come on the night out for safety and liberation when lots of people were having block parties and potlucks? And he was really questioning, Why me? Why do I have the authority to do this? And it just takes one person stepping forward to create space for everyone to come together. And so he did that. He took the leap of faith to create a small block party. We went with the truck and visited, and it was just a beautiful coming together of neighbors, and people were sharing stories very poignant, you know?

[01:29:44.260] - Speaker 3

And they hadn't seen each other in so long, and some neighbors had never met each other. But there was this sense of, like, reawakening after COVID and seeing the potential for trying to do things in a new way, in a different way, way that's more caring.